

# USDANEWS

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## USDA Issues Revised Civil Rights Policy; Launches Several New Initiatives

by Ron Hall, Office of Communications

**U**SDA has issued a revised Departmentwide civil rights policy which spells out new requirements concerning the accountability of USDA's managers and employees in instances of discrimination and the use of performance appraisals to measure the civil rights performance of employees.

The revised policy was a direct result of several initiatives which Secretary **Dan Glickman** announced in a speech to USDA employees, held in the Patio of the Department's Whitten Building in Washington, DC, on June 29.

The revised policy, Departmental Regulation No. 4300-6, dated June 30, 2000, and titled "Civil Rights Policy for the Department of Agriculture," updates a policy by the same name and number dated March 16, 1998.

The revised policy adds two new sections to the document which preceded it.

The first new section, titled "Performance Management Plans," advises that civil rights performance is to be evaluated "as a part of the performance appraisal process of all USDA employees." In addition, it notes that "A separate critical civil rights performance element will be included in the management performance plans of all supervisors."

The second new section, titled "Accountability," advises that "Departmental officials, managers, supervisors, and other employees will be held accountable for discrimination, civil rights violations, and related misconduct" and that agencies are to take "appropriate corrective or disciplinary action." Final decisions containing findings of discrimination and/or settlement agreements are to be referred, "for appropriate action," to the appropriate agency-level human resources management office—or, in certain defined cases, to the Department's Office of Human Resources Management.

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"This poster should make a good visual at our upcoming conference," notes **Brad Rein** (left), CSREES's National AgrAbility Project leader, to **Carol Maus** (right), National AgrAbility Project Director for Easter Seals. They will head a conference in November, during which employees from FSA and NRCS will receive training on how they can work with the AgrAbility Project in their local communities to assist farmers, ranchers, and farm workers with disabilities to continue productive lives in agriculture. This is one of many unique, creative, and innovative initiatives in which USDA employees are promoting and advancing civil rights and healthier working relationships, both within USDA and with USDA's customers. Note the story below.—Photo by Marti Asner

## Our Employees Are Creative, Innovative In Promoting & Advancing Civil Rights At USDA

by Ron Hall, Office of Communications

**A**t last count, USDA consists of 107,500 federal employees—full-time, part-time, and temporary—located at headquarters and field offices and agricultural posts overseas. USDA's employees are a creative bunch—so it's no surprise that employees have come up with unique, creative, and innovative initiatives to promote and advance civil rights and healthier working relationships, both within the Department and with USDA's customers.

What follows is a sample of those initiatives.

The Food Safety and Inspection Service teamed up with USDA's Asian Pacific American Network in Agriculture (APANA) employee organization to assist approximately 150 very small meat and poultry plants, whose owners are Asian Pacific Americans, in com-

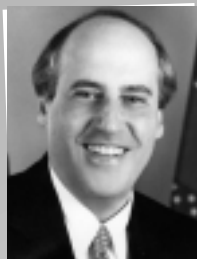
plying with the requirements of implementing the new Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points inspection system. These plants had until this past January to develop and implement their HACCP plans.

"We found that we could be helpful to those Asian Pacific American plant owners by providing language interpretation and translation, offering assistance to help them understand HACCP regulatory requirements, and promoting participation by those owners in our HACCP workshops," explained **Jim Rasekh**, an FSIS food scientist. "So back in 1998 FSIS first teamed up with APANA members who were also FSIS employees to offer that assistance—and we've finished up in January."

**Cynthia Mercado**, FSIS's special assistant for diversity, noted that this effort was part of an overall FSIS initiative called the "FSIS/APANA Harmonization Initiative." "It began in 1997 as a dialogue between FSIS and APANA to address issues and challenges facing Asian Pacific American employees in our agency," she said.

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# Secretary Dan Glickman



In this column in the June 2000 USDA News I discussed some of the progress we had made to improve our civil rights performance at USDA. But I want to

revisit this issue because it is so important and because the pursuit of civil rights is an ongoing journey.

On June 29, I gathered USDA senior management, administrators, human resources staff, civil rights, and other employees at the Whitten Building in Washington, where I gave a speech about that civil rights journey. I want to share some of those thoughts with you.

I'm proud of our civil rights accomplishments—increased farm lending to women and minorities; more contracts awarded to socially disadvantaged and minority firms; a landmark legal settlement; and greater diversity in the USDA workforce, among other things. But this is no time for a victory lap. There is plenty of work still to be

done, and I am committed to pushing this issue relentlessly during my remaining months in office.

I have announced several new steps that will further advance the cause of civil rights at USDA. We are going to increase accountability, making it more difficult for people to use the civil rights settlement process to avoid disciplinary action. We will be hiring outside contractors to help us manage the overwhelming backlog of civil rights complaints. We will be sending outside investigation teams into selected areas to closely evaluate civil rights compliance in our local offices. And we are increasing the number of employee minority advisory committees, which give employees the opportunity to influence USDA civil rights policy.

These structural changes are important, but civil rights begins with basic human relations, whether it's a manager communicating with his or her staff or an FSA county employee explaining our programs and services to a family farmer. Ultimately, for any policy or process to work, we have to treat each other with decency and respect, seeing past each other's differences. How we treat each other

defines who we are.

In January 2001 there will be a new President, a new Administration and a new Secretary of Agriculture. But the USDA commitment to civil rights will not end there. When I sit down to brief my successor on the important issues facing the Department, civil rights will be at the very top of the list. Ultimately, I believe that the employees and customers of USDA will hold the next Secretary's feet to the fire, and the next one and the one after that if necessary, until this journey is complete.

We simply cannot afford to allow civil rights problems to interfere with our work. So while this is about justice, it's also about our ability to meet our commitments to the people we serve.

As USDA becomes a civil rights leader, it not only meets a moral obligation, it becomes a more effective Department as well, better able to provide its critical services to the American people. It not only becomes a better place to work, it becomes a better-working place, one that is true to its name: the People's Department. ♦

## *Initiatives...continued from pg. 1*

As it did in the previous version, the revised policy ends by stating that "The Subcabinet, agency heads, managers, supervisors, and other employees across the Department will be held accountable for civil rights at USDA," and then concludes with the statement that "All employees must demonstrate a commitment to equal opportunity for all."

In addition to his remarks, during his June 29 speech, concerning greater accountability and use of performance evaluations, Glickman identified several other civil rights-oriented actions he was initiating.

First, he advised that he had instructed USDA's Office of Civil Rights to hire outside contractors to help manage the backlog of civil rights complaints. "...there are over 600 claims that haven't even gotten past the first step," he noted. Those contractors would review the allegations of discrimination "and determine whether they should be moved to phase two—investigation."

"We need to get this process moving, and if bringing in outside help is what we've got to do, then that's what we'll do," he said.

Second, Glickman said he was launching an experiment in which an outside investiga-

tion team would be sent into selected geographic areas to evaluate civil rights compliance in local USDA offices. Explaining that he wanted to find out "why there's a high concentration of complaints in some areas," he said that the outside investigatory team would have "a mandate to get answers and report back directly to me."

"These will be outside, objective investigators brought in to find answers and hopefully offer up some solutions," he said.

Third, Glickman said he was expanding the number of employee advisory committees by forming five additional such committees, "one each for African Americans, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, women, and gays and lesbians."

Currently the Department has two such minority advisory committees: the Secretary's Hispanic Advisory Council—which advises Glickman on issues concerning Hispanic employees and the Hispanic community at large—and the Secretary's Advisory Committee on Employees with Disabilities—which advises Glickman on issues concerning employees with disabilities as well as "reasonable accommodation."

"They have worked out quite well—giving

these communities a voice and another place to go with their concerns," he said.

Fourth, Glickman inaugurated a series of breakout sessions, led by USDA senior officials, with employees at both headquarters and field locations. Called "listening sessions" at some locations, a number were held immediately following his remarks, while more were conducted several days later. "Every agency, every county, every office needs to find a way to deal with issues of human relations before they get out of hand," he observed. Accordingly, "part of the agenda of these sessions," he explained, "is for you to give us feedback, to talk to us about the problems and the successes."

"I especially want you to share with us and among yourselves what is working and what you've tried," he added.

Glickman also told his audience of employees that ultimately he plans to sit down with his successor "to lay it out—exactly what we've done, exactly where USDA is headed, and the institutional structure that we've put in place to deal with civil rights."

"There is no turning back," he underscored. "The employees of USDA won't have it any other way." ♦

"Since then FSIS has broadened its Harmonization Initiative to include periodic dialogues between senior officials in FSIS and officials from other USDA civil rights employee organizations." They include the American Indian Council (AIC), the Association for Persons with Disabilities in Agriculture (APDA), Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered Employees (GLOBE), Hispanic American Cultural Efforts (HACE), and the Coalition of Minority Employees.

The Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service has been administering its AgrAbility Project—the Department's only program specifically designed to assist farmers, ranchers, and farm workers with disabilities to continue productive lives in agriculture—since it was first authorized in the 1990 Farm Bill.

**Brad Rein**, CSREES national program leader for the AgrAbility Project, said CSREES administers the program and provides grants to university-based Cooperative Extension Systems which, in turn, partner with private disability service providers. Those national partners—the University of Wisconsin Extension Service and Easter Seals—then offer training to 18 state AgrAbility projects, which assess the needs of disabled farmers and ranchers.

"State-level AgrAbility Project staff offer farmers and ranchers such assessments as how to modify buildings and farm equipment to accommodate particular disabilities, as well as how to facilitate rural independent living," he noted. "The Project has assisted

over 8,000 farmers and ranchers with disabilities since it was established in 1991."

Rein added that National Project staff will provide training to, among other participants, approximately 65 employees from the Farm Service Agency and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, at the annual AgrAbility conference to be held in San Antonio on November 7-10. "Our goal is to help those employees, in their local communities, assist farmers, ranchers, and farm workers with disabilities to continue productive lives in agriculture," he said.

Specialists in the Foreign Agricultural Service's international cooperation and development section assist developing countries in agricultural development initiatives. But in an attempt to tap an additional source of expertise, FAS recently collaborated with the International Programs staff in CSREES and the American Indian Higher Education Consortium to hold an international workshop attended by administrators, faculty, and students from U.S. Tribal Colleges and Universities, or TCUs.

"We realized that the personnel from the TCUs were subject matter specialists on many of the agricultural projects we promote abroad," explained **Howard Anderson**, director of FAS's Development Resources Division.

For instance, several attendees from the TCUs brought hands-on knowledge about fish production and farming on arid land—which would be valuable assets to offer to FAS-sponsored programs in Honduras and West Africa, respectively.

"There are many cultural similarities—such as respect for tribal traditions and environmental sensitivity—between American Indians and indigenous peoples in developing nations," Anderson observed.

"So, through our 'Globalizing Tribal Colleges and Universities' workshop on August 10 and 11, we encouraged the attendees from the TCUs to become more involved in international programs onsite, so they could help out in developing countries."

USDA established a Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center in October 1998 to help USDA manage conflicts more effectively and efficiently, whether in the workplace between employees or between USDA and parties outside of the Department. It relies on "alternative dispute resolution," or ADR, techniques, as problem-solving tools in the resolution of those conflicts. Examples of ADR techniques include mediation, facilitation, neutral evalua-

tion, arbitration, and use of an ombudsman. Mediation and facilitation are the two ADR methods most often offered at USDA.

"The key points in this particular approach to managing conflict in the workplace," explained Center Director **Jeff Knishkowsky**, "are that it involves the intervention of a neutral, unbiased, skilled third party, and it is an informal, confidential, non-adversarial, voluntary option." The March-April 1999 issue of the **USDA News** carried a story on the Center and ADR.

He said that the Center's more recent activities include updating the Department's policy on ADR. Secretary's Memorandum 4710-1, dated March 23, 2000 and titled "USDA Alternative Dispute Resolution Policy," delineates the situations in which ADR techniques may be used and the role of USDA officials in ensuring that ADR alternatives are available for all employees, as well as in disputes with USDA customers.

Even more recently, USDA employees were mailed a memorandum which accompanied their Statement of Earnings and Leave for Pay Period No. 15. The memo, dated July 18, 2000, titled "Resolving Conflicts in the Workplace," and signed by Secretary **Dan Glickman**, promoted the reliance on ADR techniques to resolve conflict. "I have directed all USDA agencies to make ADR services, and specifically mediation, available to their employees as an option before the filing of more formal complaints or grievances," he said in the memo.

Glickman also noted that the Center and the Office of Communications developed a 20-minute video called "A Better Way," which contains a mediation demonstration and explains how employees can benefit from mediation.

"Since 1998 agency ADR programs at USDA have coordinated hundreds of mediation sessions, both at headquarters and field offices," added Center senior conflict management specialist **Elly Cleaver**. She said that the Center is sponsoring a National Mediator Training Conference in Crystal City, Va., on September 26-27 to enhance the skills of USDA employees who are trained mediators.

Since 1998 the National Finance Center in New Orleans has been operating "Inclusion University," which is an independent self-study program for NFC employees. "Its purpose," explained **Don Lewis**, chief of NFC's Workforce Services Staff, "is to assist NFC employees in learning more about

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*"Because of your RHS housing repair loan, we were able to help you both modernize and increase the size of this window," observes RD's **Daryl Kaluakini Atay** (left), as she and **Shigeko Hasegawa** examine some of the repairs on Hasegawa's home. Note the story on page 7.—Photo by James Ino*



## Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services

### Promoting The New Guidelines

**QUESTION:** What do a cereal company, a public relations firm, and a supermarket chain have in common?

**ANSWER:** They are all working with USDA to help get the word out about the benefits of good nutrition and a healthy lifestyle.

Nutritionists at USDA's Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion organized a roundtable of food industry representatives who met on July 19 with Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services **Shirley Watkins** and Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion Executive Director **Rajen Anand**.

The topic: spreading the word about the recently released "Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2000." The Guidelines give consumers science-based advice about making food choices that promote health and help prevent disease. In addition, they provide the basis for federal nutrition policy and nutrition education activities.

**Carole Davis**, director of the Center's Nutrition Promotion Staff, described the purpose of the roundtable. "We need fresh and innovative approaches to getting the messages contained in the Guidelines out to all Americans," she noted. "But USDA can't do this alone—so Under Secretary Watkins and Center Executive Director Anand have asked food industry leaders to join with us to get out this message: that everyone can make choices to improve their health and well-being."

Center marketing specialist **Jackie Haven** added that "It's clear the messages of the Guidelines resonate with people across America, and food industry representatives want to be part of this effort to encourage healthy living through the new Guidelines."

"Widespread use of the Guidelines is especially important now with the rising rates of obesity in America, especially childhood obesity," she added. "All Americans need to be aware of how much, as well as what, they are eating."

Attendees at the roundtable heard about plans USDA is making to promote the Guidelines, as well as discuss how they may be able to add to those efforts. "It's a win-win-win situation, in my opinion," observed Center nutritionist **David Herring**. "USDA effectively promotes the Guidelines, the partners benefit from sales of their products and good public relations, and the American public receives the most updated, healthful information available."

## Employees make these things...

# HAPPEN!

The roundtable followed the release of the "Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2000" in May. The Guidelines are updated every five years, and the 2000 version marks the fifth published since 1980. They are based on recommendations from an 11-member Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee, a group of nutrition and medical researchers. The January 1996 **USDA News** carried a story about the 1995 version of the Guidelines.

Center nutritionist **Trish Britten** explained that several new features are emphasized in this latest revision of the Guidelines. "The Guidelines are now grouped to make them easier to remember, understand, and use," she noted. "The overall message of the Guidelines comes from these groups: Aim for fitness, Build a healthy base, and Choose sensibly. These are the ABCs for good health."

Center nutritionist **Alyson Escobar** said that, for the first time, the Guidelines contain recommendations on physical activity and safe food handling to prevent illness. "These two new guidelines," she pointed out, "give consumers important messages: that being physically active and keeping food safe to eat are vital to good health."

Davis and her staff were in charge of developing the 39-page Dietary Guidelines booklet, working with staff from the Agricultural Research Service and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to produce this joint USDA/HHS publication. **Julie Olson**, an art director with the Design Center in the Office of Communications, coordinated its design.

Center staff are already busy giving presentations to educators and health professionals to help get the word out about the new Guidelines. For instance, in June Britten spoke on the Guidelines to District of Columbia nutritionists with the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children. Then in July Center nutritionist **Charlotte Pratt** described the new Guidelines to an audience of school health workers in Washington, DC.

"There is great interest among these professionals in using the Guidelines," Pratt said.

—**JOHN WEBSTER**



## Natural Resources and Environment

### "A Layer Of Cellophane"

The firefighters have long since left Los Alamos, N.M.—following the devastating fire in that area in early May—and their attention has turned to major infernos in such states as Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington.

But specialists with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Forest Service are still focusing on Los Alamos, as they attempt to help bring charred land areas back to life.

The fire in the Los Alamos area, known as the Cerro Grande Fire, began on May 4 when National Park Service fire crews at its Bandelier National Monument in north-central New Mexico purposely started a 'prescribed fire' to clear out underbrush that was thought to be potential fuel for some future wildfire.

However, partly because of low humidity and high winds, that fire got out of control. It then spread quickly and ultimately burned about 47,650 acres of National Forest land, private land, tribal land, and U.S. Department of Energy land, including destroying more than 200 homes and burning some structures at the nuclear weapons laboratory in that area. Of that total acreage, at least 20,000 acres were considered most heavily damaged and environmentally sensitive.

Accordingly, once the fire was contained, NRCS and FS specialists teamed up to begin seeding those 20,000 acres. According to **Rosendo Trevino**, NRCS state conservationist in New Mexico, based in Albuquerque, the goal was to get ground cover growing quickly



**Maxine Parrish**, a FS facilities manager on the Wine-ma National Forest in southern Oregon and a member of the Burned Area Emergency Response Team, covers bags of seed to be used in aerial seeding, to rehabilitate forest lands heavily damaged by the Cerro Grande Fire in New Mexico. —**Photo by Bob Nichols**





*"As I pour water into this metal ring," notes NRCS's Ken Scheffe (right), "the speed with which the water is absorbed will tell us the degree to which this soil repels water." He and NRCS's Arlene Tugel are conducting a soil test, in the aftermath of the Cerro Grande Fire.—Photo by Bob Nichols*

to reduce soil erosion, restore vegetation destroyed by the fire, and reduce the potential for storm flow runoff and flooding.

"We wanted to help nature start the healing process," he emphasized.

Leonard Atencio, supervisor of the Santa Fe National Forest, based in Santa Fe, N.M., noted that the initiative, an aerial seeding, used 381,000 pounds of native grass and small grain seeds. "The goal was to apply 60 seeds per square foot, and in the process ultimately establish 9 to 15 plants per square foot," he noted.

Barry Imler, FS range and wildlife specialist on the Santa Fe National Forest who has been overseeing the rehabilitation operations following the Cerro Grande Fire, said that FS coordinated the use of a helicopter and several planes for the aerial seeding operations—the last of which was completed on July 28.

NRCS and FS also worked with volunteer crews and firefighters in related rehabilitation activities, including raking, mulching, and seeding; placement of log erosion barriers; hazard tree removal; and road rehabilitation.

But there was a unique complication to the seeding initiative, called "hydrophobicity." Arlene Tugel, an NRCS soil scientist with the NRCS Soil Quality Institute, based in Las Cruces, N.M., explained that hydrophobicity refers to a condition that can develop in the soil after a fire.

"Hydrophobic soils occur after a really hot fire in which waxy materials from the burned vegetation penetrate the soil and coat the soil particles, causing them to repel water," she advised. "It's like someone has draped a layer of cellophane over the ground which then slows water movement into the soil, resulting instead in excessive water runoff."

Ken Scheffe, the NRCS state soil scientist based in Albuquerque, added that the heat of the fire will determine the depth to which the waxy materials have penetrated the soil. "Based on that depth," he advised, "it could take several years, including several freeze-

thaw cycles through winters, before the soil is able to readily accept rainfall or snowfall."

But one positive note, he added, is that hydrophobic soils tend to have enough cracks and fissures in them so that grass and plant seeds can lodge there, take root, and grow—and, in the process, assist in the breakup of the waxy, water-repellant layer of soil.

"Fires are part of nature," Tugel observed.

"But when there has been a long time between fires, the resulting vegetative buildup makes soil more vulnerable to this phenomenon of hydrophobicity—and that's what happened in many areas of the Cerro Grande Fire."

—RON HALL



## Rural Development

### A Life-Saving Weather 'Heads-Up'

Here's a story about how five minutes might save your life—and how, if you live in rural America, employees with the Rural Utilities Service are trying to get you that five minutes.

Summertime in America marks the middle of tornado season. The ability to get advance notification of approaching tornadoes could spell the difference between surviving such a storm, or not.

That's why over the years the National Weather Service (NWS), part of the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration, has encouraged residents of tornado-prone parts of the country to purchase 'weather radios.' The normal message of a 'weather radio' consists of real-time, uninterrupted, localized weather reports from NWS. But during tornado emergencies NWS activates 'weather radios' that may be turned off, so that even people who may be sleeping will still receive NWS's tornado warnings—and thereby be informed of their vulnerability to approaching tornadoes. This is *unlike* watching a weather report on TV—which requires the listener to already be aware of the impending crisis in the first place.

But you can't hear a 'weather radio' unless your geographic area is covered by a transmitter. So emergency radio transmitters have been installed on tall towers around the country to strengthen those weather signals—thereby reaching more citizens with their timely weather warnings.

"The complication," advised Ed Cameron, director of the Advance Services Division in RUS's Telecommunications Program, "is that in the late 1960s and '70s the push was on to install those transmitters throughout *urban* America. But virtually none were installed in *rural* America."



*"What you're now hearing is a real-time, uninterrupted, localized weather report from the National Weather Service," explains RUS's Ed Cameron, as he adjusts the volume on the 'weather radio' he keeps in his office.—Photo by Gerald Nugent*

"This meant that, even if residents of rural America had 'weather radios,' they might not be covered by a transmitter—so the radio wouldn't have any signal to receive."

"As a result," he advised, "many in rural areas can't get those early warnings—which might mean the difference between surviving a tornado and succumbing to it."

Accordingly, this past spring RUS teamed up with NWS to launch an increased effort to extend emergency radio service to rural areas of the nation. Cameron explained that RUS headquarters and field employees are identifying utilities which own towers in rural areas around the country which are *not* currently receiving NWS's weather transmissions. Then NWS staffers are working with those rural utilities to obtain 'tower space' to install emergency radio transmitters onto those utility towers, to provide warning signals to residents of that rural area.

Cameron advised that more than two-thirds of the land area west of the Mississippi River are still not covered by these NWS weather radio transmissions, and large rural areas of the eastern part of the country also lack such coverage.

The results so far?

Cameron noted that RUS employees publicized this initiative nationwide. Then, for instance, in Missouri they identified utilities which owned four towers in rural areas of Missouri which had not been receiving NWS weather transmissions. NWS has since worked with local rural electric cooperatives to install emergency radio transmitters onto those four.

He added that, while the focus is often on tornadoes, this particular communications initiative applies to other natural disasters, such as hurricanes, flash floods, and even emergency freeze warnings for farmers, as well as to human-caused disasters such as chemical spills.

"Each emergency radio transmitter costs about \$80,000," Cameron pointed out, "so it's significant when we're able to make this happen—in order to benefit the residents of rural America."

—RON HALL



**C**hris McLean was sworn in as the administrator of the Rural Utilities Service. He succeeded **Wally Beyer**, who held that position from November 1993 until he retired in October 1999 and returned to his home in Bismarck, N.D.

From November 1999 until his swearing in, in July 2000, McLean served as acting administrator of RUS. In addition, from January 1998 until July 2000 he was RUS's deputy administrator for program policy and telecommunications. The August 1998 issue of the **USDA News** carried his complete biographical sketch, following his selection to that position. ♦

*Creative, Innovative...continued from pg. 3*

other people and other cultures."

NFC program manager **Kathy Barre** added that this voluntary program is structured using two basic approaches to learning: 'Study,' which is through use of books and videotapes, and 'Dialogue,' which is through participation in discussions concerning cultural awareness in a non-threatening environment. The 'Discussion' component takes place during the work day, while the 'Study' component occurs outside of the work day.

"Participants in our Inclusion University fill out self-assessment forms following each course of study, to gauge what they got out of that particular approach," she explained. "The students then earn credits, which add up to non-accredited degrees at the associate, bachelor, master, and doctorate levels," she added.

Lewis said that, to date, NFC employees have earned 89 'Inclusion University degrees,' including 61 'Associate of Awareness and Inclusion' degrees, 15 'Bachelor of Understanding and Inclusion' degrees, 7 'Master of Interpersonal Skill and Inclusion' degrees, and 6 'Doctorate of Diversity and Inclusion' degrees.

USDA employees also have a history of promoting civil rights and healthier working relationships outside normal office activities and on an individual basis. As a typical example, every September for the last four years **Bill Stump**, the veterinary medical officer with the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's Veterinary Services Field Office, stationed in Grand Island, Neb., has demonstrated how to test bison for brucellosis and tuberculosis to a 6th grade class of mostly American Indian students at a local middle school in Mission, S.D., on the Rosebud Indian Reservation.

Often working with APHIS veterinary medical officer **Joseph Coyle** or APHIS ani-

## Editor's Roundup

### USDA people in the news



**P**atricia Garamendi was named as the deputy administrator for international cooperation and development in the Foreign Agricultural Service. She succeeded **Mary Ann Keefe**, who held that position from November 1997 until she retired in May 2000, following 23 years of federal service.

From November 1998 until her appointment in May 2000, Garamendi served as the assistant deputy administrator for farm pro-

mal health technician **Alan Zastrow**, Stump explains how the equipment is used in collecting blood samples from the bison, and how to conduct a 'card test,' which is a blood-testing method that provides instantaneous, onsite test results.

"First, we do our presentation in their classroom, which includes a video and a slide show on how we round up and then test the bison," Stump explained. "Then, a few days later, the students travel by bus to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Ft. Niobrara Wildlife Refuge in northern Nebraska—close to the South Dakota/Nebraska border—where the students watch the roundup of generally around one hundred bison annually, and then see how we actually collect blood samples from most of the animals rounded up."

"Most of the students in that local community are American Indians—and bison tend to carry much historical and spiritual meaning for them," he observed. "So their teachers tell us that our efforts at educational outreach have been a real motivator for the students."

As another example, **Archie Tucker**, the area administrative officer at the Agricultural Research Service's Mid South Area Office in Stoneville, Ms., has worked with high school students in his community to develop skills that will help them in the work place. Along with three area office members of his staff—human resources and outreach coordinator **Rita Keeling**, budget assistant **Justine Bryson**, and [then] environmental protection specialist **Becky Hoagland**—Tucker serves on a committee that reviews the curriculum of

grams in the Farm Service Agency. In addition, since September 1999 she served as director of the USDA Millennium Council as well as director of Millennium Green, a project of the White House Millennium Council focusing on efforts to celebrate the millennium.

Garamendi was associate director of the U.S. Peace Corps from 1993-98, where she was responsible for the nationwide operations of recruitment, selection, and placement of approximately 24,000 volunteers, during that five-year span, in 91 countries worldwide. During her tenure the number of volunteers reached a 21-year high, with the highest level of diversity in Peace Corps history. Earlier, she had served as a Peace Corps volunteer in southwestern Ethiopia from 1966-68, where she worked in community development. She subsequently returned to Ethiopia in 1985 to organize famine camps. For 20 years, during the 1970s and 1980s, she managed her family's ranch and farm operations near Sacramento, Calif.

the marketing class at the local vocational technical center.

"Our committee makes recommendations for improving curriculum and activities at the center," he explained, "and we also conduct mock interviews for the students." In some instances, he noted, students are hired on the spot for summer employment with ARS in Stoneville.

The above examples of unique, creative, and innovative employee initiatives to promote and advance civil rights and healthier working relationships, both within the Department and with USDA's customers, supplement material contained in a USDA report dated April 2000. The 42-page report, titled "Commitment to Progress—Civil Rights at the United States Department of Agriculture," documents the Department's more recent efforts to improve its civil rights practices and outreach efforts, with a focus on such areas as hiring and lending, program outreach, and customer service. The report is available on USDA's home page at

[www.usda.gov/news/civil/cr.html](http://www.usda.gov/news/civil/cr.html)

"I have no higher priority as Secretary than improving USDA's record on civil rights and ensuring that all our employees and customers are treated with fairness, dignity, and respect," Glickman said when the report was officially released on May 5, 2000.

"This report shows that our efforts are having a real impact on USDA's programs and people," he noted. "However, this is not a victory lap, it is a progress report, one that we intend to build on in the coming years." ♦

A native of northern California, Garamendi holds a B.A. degree in liberal arts from the University of California at Berkeley and a Juris Doctor degree from the Humphreys College School of Law in Stockton, Calif. ♦



**D**aryl Kaluakini Atay has assisted a number of USDA customers during her 30-year career with the Department. But her recent interaction with a Rural Development loan borrower was the first time that her assistance might also be regarded as a 'high school reunion project.'

Atay is a community development specialist with the Rural Development field office in Wailuku on the island of Maui in Hawaii. In June 1999, an 80-year-old widow named **Shigeko Hasegawa** suffered a fire in her home of 40 years.

The fire, thought to have been caused by arson, destroyed the kitchen and most of the home's rafters above the structure. In addition, the rest of the home and its contents were damaged by smoke, water, and the chemicals used in putting the fire out. The home's mortgage had been paid in full, but the house, not up to code because of its age, was uninsured.

Once the smoke had cleared, Hasegawa found her way to the RD office in Wailuku. According to **Irene Lam**—RD's community development manager for the islands of Maui, Molokai, and Lanai in Hawaii—Atay worked with Hasegawa to help her obtain a Rural Housing Service housing repair loan and, later, an RHS housing repair grant, to repair, improve, and modernize her three bedroom, one bath residence; make the dwelling safe and sanitary; and remove health and safety hazards.

"But after Mrs. Hasegawa obtained the financial assistance from our office," Atay recounted, "I wanted to see if I could help her keep the costs of rehabilitating her home within her means."

"So I got in touch with some of my high school classmates from the class of 1967 at Baldwin High School, here in Wailuku."

Actually, it wasn't too hard to reach two of her former classmates—**Leilani Kukaua** and **Doreen "Pua" Gomes**. "We have a routine of meeting every Tuesday to exercise and socialize, and we've been doing this for over four years," Atay explained.

"But this time when we got together, I suggested that the three of us help Mrs. Hasegawa, and that we also try to make it into a class project and involve some of our other former class-

mates who still live in this area."

So the three classmates agreed to start on their new 'class project' right away. First, Atay—on her own time and on weekends—and her classmates packed up and then moved Hasegawa's personal belongings into the house's carport and another storage area so that the contractors could begin their repair work. "I'm sure Mrs. Hasegawa wouldn't mind if I referred to her as a pack rat," Atay quipped. "She definitely had a lot of items that are dear to her, and that we moved for her—very carefully."

"And then, to relocate the heavy items," she laughed, "we recruited our husbands."

Atay also initiated the contacts with some of the various contractors—including a painter—who performed the repair work. Then, when the repairs were completed, the three classmates moved Hasegawa's items back into her rehabilitated residence. They are currently helping her pack, sort, and store some items she obtained from her daughter.

"This particular experience had some extra meaning for me," Atay observed. "All three of us have lost our mothers—and mine passed away most recently, in January 1999," she said.

"So we, in effect, 'adopted' Mrs. Hasegawa as *our* mother—and she likes it, since she has told us that the three of us *are* like family to her." ♦

## Letters

**Dear Sec. Glickman,**

I am employed by the Farm Service Agency at the USDA Field Service Center in Ada, Minn.

With all of the staff cuts that have happened over the past years, and with the addition of more and more FSA programs—both new ones and the increased use of current ones—will there be any increases in budget to hire permanent staff to help with those programs that are coming into play because of at least three consecutive years of natural disasters in our geographic area?

We already work our scheduled hours plus evenings and weekends, with no overtime pay to compensate us.

**Nikie Scherfenberg**  
Ada, Minn.

**Dear Nikie,**

*I share your concern. The FSA workload remains heavy, and staffing has been a continuing problem for FSA management. Supplemental funding provided by Congress in November 1999 for the retention of temporary staffing has been exhausted. In addition, my authority to shift funds within USDA is limited, and USDA does not have funding within the scope of that authority which would be adequate to alleviate this situation. Therefore, USDA must rely on Congress for assistance.*

*I am pleased to report that Congress has recently passed a bill providing supplemental appropriations for fiscal year 2000 that includes funding to retain temporary staff and meet other urgent administrative needs in FSA. The President signed the bill on July 13, 2000.*

*I appreciate the opportunity to respond to your concerns in this matter.*

**Dan Glickman**  
Secretary

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<b>Ron Hall</b>	<i>Editor</i>
<b>Heather Currett</b>	<i>Art Director</i>
<b>Cedric Drake</b>	<i>Printing and Distribution Coordinator</i>
<b>Charles Hobbs</b>	<i>Home Page Coordinator</i>
<b>Gayle Turner</b>	<i>Home Page Assistant</i>

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"This 'Aim-Build-Choose' graphic will help focus people's attention on the Dietary Guidelines," says the Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion's **Carole Davis** (2nd from left) to OC's **Julie Olson** (3rd from left), as she reviews the exhibit promoting the new "Dietary Guidelines for Americans" with the Center's **John Webster** (left), **Trish Britten** (2nd from right), **Jackie Haven** (right), and **David Herring** (kneeling). This new exhibit is one of several initiatives which Center staffers have recently launched to promote the Guidelines. Note the story on page 4.—**PHOTO BY RON HALL**



#### HELP US FIND **Moshe Unger**

Missing: 6-2-97

D.O.B. 3-13-91

Hair: Red

Height: 4' 0"

From: Albany, NY

Sex: Male

Eyes: Brown

Weight: 50 lbs.

If you have information, please call

**1-800-843-5678**

NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN

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*Hispanic Heritage Month*

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(202) 720-7314 or (202) 720-8372 (TTY)

#### ◆ September 26-27

*USDA National Mediator Training Conference*

Crystal City, Va.

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